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SUBJECT: CDA GATHERS INFLUENTIAL WOMEN TO PARTNER ON THE ELIMINATION
OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

REF: 09 STATE 120322; 09 BRASILIA 1365

SUMMARY

11. In an effort to highlight the work of activists and organizations at the forefront of addressing violence against women, on December 9 Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Lisa Kubiske and emboffs visited Civil Police Chief Sandra Gomes de Melo at the Women's Precinct (DEAM) in Brasilia. The next day, the CDA hosted a luncheon for prominent women law enforcement and judicial leaders in honor of the International Day for Human Rights to learn more about the opportunities and challenges for women in Brazil, and to discuss how our two countries may partner more concretely to promote the advancement of women. All of the contacts expressed strong interest in a partnership with the USG on working toward raising awareness, assistance programs and stronger prosecution of perpetrators of domestic violence. Although both GOB and USG resources remain limited, we plan to continue to promote dialogue and cooperation on this topic to successfully implement many of the proposed programs.

END SUMMARY

CIVIL POLICE PRECINCT FOR WOMEN

12. Specialized women's precincts (DEAMs) were created 25 years ago, the first in Sao Paulo. Although there are around 400 DEAMs in Brazil, most are in the South, and a few are in the Northeast. There is one DEAM in Ceara in the Northeast because of the efforts of Maria da Penha - the first woman to fight for the sentencing of her husband for domestic violence and the stimulus for Brazil's law against domestic violence (Reftel 09 Brasilia 1365). CDA and emboffs visited the (22 -year old) DEAM in Brasilia with the highest number of domestic violence reports (40 percent) in the Federal District. Primarily female police officers and chiefs work in 24-hour shifts, divided into groups that have one police chief, four policewomen and one clerk. There is also a multidisciplinary team with one social anthropologist, one social worker and two psychologists who offer assistance to the women. All women who come to the precinct have a right to shelter at a shelter house provided by the state government. They are entitled to a forensic medical examination for evidence and there they receive a kit containing new clothing and toiletries. The old clothes are kept as evidence in case charges are brought against the assailant. Ongoing renovations to the precinct will include private interview rooms for women to file their reports and a play room for children.

13. The police also have a mobile precinct van that is equipped with

laptops connected to the police database (see photo attached photo). These vans go to underserved neighborhoods to hear complaints and educate women on how and when to complain and on all their rights. They train community leaders, volunteer prosecutors, professors, and medical doctors as part of this effort to educate women about their rights. Their plan is to expand this program and teach domestic violence awareness to adolescents in 2010.

¶4. There are approximately 9000 cases of violence against women a year in the Federal District of Brasilia which has a population of about 2.5 million; 4000 of the cases are filed in the precinct visited, and each case receives a police investigation and write-up. The precinct chief guesstimated that approximately one third of domestic violence reports received here are taken all the way to prosecution. Many judges offer treatment or therapy to the violator instead of sentencing.

WOMEN LEADERS MEET TO DISCUSS WOMEN'S ISSUES

¶5. The following day, the CDA hosted a lunch for prominent women leaders including Ellen Gracie Northfleet, Justice of the Supreme Court and a former Fulbrighter; Ambassador Vera Lucia Barrouin Machado, U/S for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs; Chief Sandra Gomes de Melo, Head of the Women's Precinct in Brasilia who just launched the "Safe Women" Project; and Saba Cordeiro Macedo of the Federal District section of the Brazilian Bar Association.

¶6. The CDA used the lunch to set the stage for future cooperation on gender issues. A GOB proposed bilateral MOU on gender, now under consideration in Washington, has a strong emphasis on bilateral judicial, law enforcement, and political cooperation to promote women's rights, including the fight against gender-based violence and equal access to the judicial system. With that in mind, the CDA encouraged a focus on justice and the law enforcement sector to target those that need this specific assistance. The CDA emphasized the importance of women's issues to the Secretary of State.

¶7. Our Brazilian guests identified the primary challenges facing victims of domestic violence, among them, that the perpetrators are not often brought to justice due to the current judicial system, which allows for multiple appeals. There is a breakdown after the charges are presented and often these cases do not make it into court either due to lack of financial resources from the victim or the way they are counseled and made to feel that it would be problematic for them to pursue prosecuting the father of their children or other such suggestive comments.

ACTIONS

¶8. Challenged to develop ideas for concrete projects, participants at the meeting agreed to ask top level attorneys to commit to pro bono work with the goal of bringing more criminals to justice. This would also encourage younger lawyers to be engaged in cases of violence against women.

¶9. Women's Precinct Chief Melo discussed the goals of a recently launched Brazilian "Safe Women" Project:

- To make people, specifically women, aware of domestic violence.

- To encourage women to use the services available to protect them.
- To provide a more humanized service to those who become a victim.
- To enforce the Maria da Penha law.

¶10. Participants at the lunch agreed to support this project through the following initial actions:

- Initiate a campaign similar to "Dress for Success", through which women can donate clothes, shoes, and accessories. These items would go to women of low income communities, who are victims of violence, have low self esteem, and are afraid to go to court to face their assailants.
- Engage with the Brazilian Bar Association to inspire new lawyers to work with women's issues.
- Involve women and men in the advertising industry to create campaigns countering violence against women.

COMMENT:

¶11. With the departure of Brazil's RLA due to a lack of funding, it will be more difficult to follow up on these issues, among others, in which the RLA was leading our partnership effort with Brazil. Nonetheless, we plan to continue to encourage this open dialogue between the USG and the GOB, and to include prominent local women leaders in UN organizations and NGOs to work toward common interests in the elimination of domestic violence and punishment for those that commit this crime.

The Civil Police mobile precinct van. Pictured from left to right: Vera Galante, Public Affairs; Meribeth Culver, Political; Chief Sandra Gomes de Melo Head of the Women's Precinct in Brasilia; Lisa Kubiske, Charge d'Affaires, a.i.; and Socorro Leal, Political.
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